

**AMERICAN RED CROSS
NEW OFFICE BUILDING**
2025 E Street, NW

Report to the American Red Cross

September 2, 1999

Abstract

The American Red Cross has submitted final site and building plans for its new office building to be located at 2025 E Street, NW. The plans respond to the concerns expressed by the Commission in its approval of preliminary plans at its March 6, 1997 meeting. The plans are also consistent with the final foundation and excavation plans approved by the Commission on April 8, 1999.

Authority

Public Law 100-637 authorizes the American Red Cross to construct a building on this site and requires that the National Capital Planning Commission shall first approve the plans.

Commission Action

The Commission:

- **Approves** the final site and building plans for the new office building, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 23.00(38.00)-40682.
- Looks forward to submission by the American Red Cross in the near future of landscape plans for the public reservations in the vicinity of the project site, in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement executed pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The American Red Cross (ARC) has submitted final site and building plans for a new office building on the site of their District of Columbia Chapter offices, at 2025 E Street, NW. Public Law (P.L.) 100-637 authorizes ARC to construct such a building on this site and requires that the plans shall first be approved by the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission.

The Site

- The site at 2025 E Street is the southern half of the square bounded by E, F, 20th, and 21st Streets NW, including the full-block frontage of approximately 400 feet along E Street. The site, covering 85,754 square feet, is owned by the U.S. Government. Pursuant to P.L. 100-637, the General Services Administration (GSA) has recently executed a 99-year lease of the site to ARC.
- Adjacent to the site, the northern half of the square is occupied by several apartment buildings from the early and mid-20th century.
- The area to the south contains numerous federal office buildings, including the Department of State, Federal Reserve Board, and Office of Personnel Management. Immediately to the south is parkland and highway ramps connecting with the E Street tunnel. ARC will landscape and maintain some parkland areas, with the landscape design subject to further review by NCPC.
- The site contains the existing ARC District Chapter Building, which is four stories tall and was constructed in the early 1950s. ARC has recently begun demolition of this building (although portions will be dismantled and then reconstructed on the site) to make room for the new office building. The demolition of this historic resource will be mitigated, to the extent possible, pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed by NCPC on February 26, 1999.
- Three blocks east of the site, ARC occupies three additional buildings in the block bounded by D, E, 17th, and 18th Streets NW. These buildings contain a small portion of ARC headquarters staff.

Final Site and Building Plans

- The final site and building plans are consistent with the preliminary site and building plans that were approved by the Commission on March 6, 1997, and with the final excavation and foundation plans that were approved by the Commission on April 8, 1999.

- The building will contain 465,000 gross square feet (unchanged from the preliminary plans), primarily for office usage, with a floor-area ratio of 5.42. The reconstructed facades of the Chapter House, on the south part of the site, will contain 55,000 square feet. There will be some occupiable space below grade, on one full and one partial level. The remaining office space will be in the new ten-story building on the northern part of the site, reaching a height of 107 feet plus an eight-foot mechanical penthouse.
- The southeast and southwest corners of the site will contain park and plaza areas. The plaza to the southwest will also be accessible from the cafeteria, which will be available for public use.
- The building entrance will be at the center of the south facade. A secondary entrance to the southwest will provide additional access to the cafeteria. A small retail space containing an ARC gift shop will be at the southeast corner, accessible from 20th Street. The final plans eliminate a previously proposed tenant office entrance to the southeast.
- The building will accommodate 2,000 employees (slightly higher than the 1,831 employees projected with the preliminary plans). ARC will initially use a portion of the building for approximately 1,300 employees (assuming completion in 2002), with the remaining office space temporarily leased to other tenants. ARC expects to occupy the entire building by 2012. ARC employees will be primarily national headquarters staff, including 1,000 employees who are currently located in Virginia. The new building will also accommodate the staff of the District Chapter of ARC.
- There will be 430 parking spaces provided below grade, with 374 of these spaces available for employees. The remaining 56 spaces will be for visitors and official vehicles, with 30 of those spaces unavailable during rush hours (to facilitate traffic flow within the garage). The parking entry and exit will be along 20th Street. The enclosed loading dock will be on the north side of the building, with access from a one-way service drive leading from 20th to 21st Streets.

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

- Beginning in 1929, and continuing throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Commission took a leading role in planning for the development of the Northwest Rectangle, including the site of the ARC building. The plan was only partially executed, and this was the only site along the north side of E Street that was actually acquired by the federal government for development during this period. In 1948, the Commission approved the plans for the Chapter House, which was constructed shortly thereafter and dedicated in 1953.
- At its meeting on January 9, 1997, the Commission deferred action on the proposed new building and instructed the Commission staff to meet with the interested parties and the applicant to work toward a resolution of outstanding differences. This meeting occurred on

January 24, 1997. In response, ARC submitted revised preliminary site and building plans for the Commission's consideration on March 6, 1997.

- At its meeting of March 6, 1997, the Commission:
 1. Took responsibility for the scope and content of the Environmental Assessment dated May 1996 for the proposed new office building.
 2. Commended ARC for the incorporation of portions of the existing building's facades and interior into the new development, and appreciated ARC's responsiveness in redesigning the north facade.
 3. Approved the preliminary site and building plans for the new office building.
 4. Requested that, in the preparation of final site and building plans, ARC:
 - a. Strengthen the design concept of combining a curved upper portion of the building with a rectangular mass below, so that the two volumes are distinct and relate appropriately to ground-level features.
 - b. Reduce the impact of truck activity on adjacent residential buildings by scheduling deliveries during workday hours, and considering appropriate noise attenuation design.
 5. Commended ARC for its intention to avoid reliance on automobile trips, as reflected in the modest amount of parking proposed, and urged ARC to insure the success of this effort by identifying and implementing transportation management strategies, such as a transit ridership subsidy program and preferential parking for carpools and vanpools.
- At its meeting of April 8, 1999, the Commission:
 1. Took responsibility for the scope and content of the Environmental Assessment Supplement dated January 1999.
 2. Approved the excavation and foundation plans for the new office building.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Commission, other public agencies, and ARC have received public comments on many occasions. The Commission received written and oral testimony at three of its meetings: January 9, 1997; March 6, 1997; and April 8, 1999. On January 24, 1997, the Commission staff held a public meeting with ARC and interested parties to discuss the community's opinions regarding key design aspects of the proposed new office building. The Commission also solicited public comments as part of the preparation of an Environmental Assessment Supplement (EAS), dated January 1999. GSA sponsored a public meeting as part of the Section 106 review process on June 5, 1997. In addition, ARC has presented the project to numerous local community meetings.

EVALUATION

Staff recommends approval of the final site and building plans for the new American Red Cross Office Building at 2025 E Street, NW.

- The final site and building plans are consistent with the preliminary plans approved by the Commission on March 6, 1997.
- The final design responds to the three issues that the Commission raised in March, 1997:
 - The visual relationship has been clarified between the curved upper stories and the rectangular mass of the lower stories. The stone for the upper portion is now specified to have a deep grooved pattern, contrasting strongly with the stone for the lower portion. The window treatment will be slightly different, with the upper windows having a curved metal trim piece. Where the expression of the curved portion continues down to ground level along 21st Street, the base has been changed from large openings to a more continuous stone wall, avoiding the suggestion of an entryway.
 - The potential impact of truck activity on adjacent residents has been addressed through such measures as noise-reducing design details and limitations on delivery schedules.
 - The Transportation Management Plan and supplemental memo provide sufficient measures to limit vehicle usage to the amount of parking provided on-site.
- ARC has incorporated many costly design features that respond to the special context of this site, such as high-quality materials, dismantling and reconstruction of portions of the existing building, and a low configuration of the penthouse.
- ARC made many design revisions in response to public comment and staff consultation prior to the Commission's approval of preliminary plans. Earlier changes have included: reduction of the building height; terracing of the north façade to allow more space for light and air between the proposed building and the apartment buildings to the north; removal from the program of the communications center planned for the top floor; enclosure of the loading dock within the building to reduce noise to adjacent properties; and public access to the cafeteria. Responding to a request from the Commission of Fine Arts, ARC also agreed to renovate and maintain an adjacent D.C. public park area.
- Submitting antennas at a future date is acceptable in order to take advantage of evolving technology. However, ARC should endeavor to fulfill its previous commitment to locate all antennas (except for an emergency back-up antenna) off-site in Virginia, away from the urbanized area of the new office building. In any future proposal, ARC should also strive to minimize the visual impact of any antennas.

- ARC still needs to prepare landscape plans for the nearby open space areas identified in the Section 106 MOA. These should be submitted in the near future, so that the landscaping work can be completed by the time the new office building is ready for occupancy.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on August 11, 1999, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the Department of Public Works; the Fire Department; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

Pursuant to P.L. 100-637, approval by the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) is required for the project. CFA approved the design concept at its meeting on July 25, 1996, and approved the preliminary plans at its meeting on March 20, 1997. CFA will consider the final plans at its meeting on September 16, 1999.

CFA participated in the negotiation of the Section 106 MOA, but did not sign the final document. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) has determined that NCPC as well as GSA, the lead agency for Section 106 review, have fulfilled their Section 106 responsibilities. A letter from ACHP is attached.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan

The proposed project would consolidate 1,300 ARC employees at one location in the District of Columbia, in close proximity to the existing ARC headquarters at 17th Street. A policy in the Federal Employment Element of the Comprehensive Plan supports consolidation of common or complementary agency functions.

The ARC site is located within walking distance of the Foggy Bottom and Farragut West Metrorail stations. Another policy in this element supports locating federal employment in areas in close proximity to Metrorail stations.

The proposed consolidation would result in the relocation of approximately 1,000 ARC employees to the District of Columbia from surrounding jurisdictions. This is generally supportive of an additional policy in this element which calls for 60 percent of federal employment in the region to be located in the District of Columbia.

The proposed design and treatment of the historic portion of the old building to be reconstructed is consistent with an applicable policy in the Preservation and Historic Features element which specifies:

The distinguishing original quality or character of Historic Properties should be protected. The removal or alteration of any historically valuable materials or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible and kept to a minimum when required for continued use. The design of additions should be compatible with the height, scale, materials, color, texture, and character of the Historic Property.

The proposed building would front on E Street, which is a designated Special Street in this element, and is consistent with the following applicable policy:

The existing street space and the buildings fronting on Special Streets and Places should be maintained, protected, and enhanced. Any repair, maintenance, improvements or new building should respect the historic elements, enhance the aesthetic quality, and promote the amenity of this space.

The proposal includes 374 employee parking spaces for the 2,000 employees. The Comprehensive Plan's employee parking standard for the area is a maximum of one parking space for every five employees. The number of employee parking spaces proposed is consistent with this parking standard. The proposed Transportation Management Plan (TMP) for the planned facility also is consistent with Comprehensive Plan requirements.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Assessment Supplement (EAS) was prepared in January 1999. The EAS evaluation determined that an environmental impact statement was not required for the proposed project. The Executive Director, by delegated authority, subsequently completed a Finding of No Significant Impact on March 24, 1999.

The proposed project will not significantly affect natural features because the site and its surroundings constitute a built, urban environment. Neither topography nor hydrology would constrain site development. The project would not noticeably affect air quality.

With regard to construction noise, the EAS stated that project construction would comply with District of Columbia Noise Control Regulations. In addition, ARC will require the construction contractor to post a public notice along the perimeter of the construction area that, at a minimum, provides the hours of construction and the name and telephone number of the local agency in charge of enforcing the D.C. Noise Control Regulations.

Noise from the loading dock and approach ramps is of particular concern because these areas are adjacent to many existing apartments. The District of Columbia currently regulates daytime and nighttime noise levels, with maximum permissible levels of 60 decibels (dB(A)) and 55 dB(A), respectively. Based on the noise modeling conducted for the EAS, long-term operational activities could potentially exceed the D.C. daytime noise standard of 60 dB(A). In order to mitigate this potential adverse impact, the EAS recommended measures to provide additional noise control and reduce operational noise levels at nearby residences. However, ARC notes that existing ambient noise levels occasionally reach 80 dB(A) at the site of the proposed loading dock, due to airplanes, traffic, and other trucks.

Noise mitigation will be provided by a variety of specific design elements. The loading dock is enclosed, and interior surfaces of the loading dock room will have sound-absorptive treatment, using such materials as acoustical tile, acoustical plaster, and sound-block concrete masonry units. The room will be enclosed with roll-down doors which will normally be kept closed, to contain sound within the loading dock area. These doors will be sound-insulated, and ARC will provide acoustical silencers to isolate other mechanical equipment in the loading dock and ramp area. ARC will also train loading dock operators to monitor and reduce noise-generating activities to the maximum extent possible. ARC has previously committed to operating the loading dock only between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., and will further endeavor to limit usage to 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., to avoid deliveries during rush hours. The ramps leading to and from the loading dock have grades of 10 to 12 percent. Mitigation measures for truck noises include sound-absorbent materials along the building face to the south and the retaining wall to the north.

Overall, maximum single-event noise levels from loading activities would be similar to those previously generated at the Chapter House, although the frequency of loading activities may increase due to the larger size of the new building. Due to ARC's agreement to limit the hours of loading dock usage, no increase in nighttime ambient noise levels would result from the proposed project.

The current submission does not address antennas. ARC will comply with the Commission's antenna guidelines for any antennas desired on the site. ARC has decided to submit antennas at a later date, closer to the completion of construction, in order to take advantage of continually evolving technology. In its submission of preliminary plans, ARC stated in a letter (attached) that its communications antennas would remain in Virginia, with a single back-up antenna located on-site for emergency use. ARC has not provided further information, but this issue will be reviewed in more detail as part of ARC's future submission of antennas to the Commission.

Transportation Management Plan

The proposal includes 430 parking spaces, including 374 spaces for the 2,000 employees. The Traffic Impact Analysis shows that the existing road network is able to handle these additional vehicles. However, a strong Transportation Management Program (TMP) will be necessary to ensure that the provided parking is sufficient to meet employee needs. ARC has submitted a TMP and supplemental memo, and staff finds the demand management strategies acceptable. The TMP proposals include:

- Assignment of an Employee Transportation Coordinator.
- Aggressive marketing and continued promotional activities toward employees, such as a personalized ride-matching service, to ensure success of the TMP objectives.
- Use of parking management, including preferential parking for high occupancy vehicle-users, and possibly transit subsidies and pricing of parking.
- Alternative work schedules to reduce the number of vehicle trips, particularly at peak traffic periods.
- An employee shuttle bus to facilitate Metro usage. As noted in the Section 106 MOA, this shuttle will also be available for use by community residents. In addition to scheduled service, ARC will provide emergency shuttle service for employees.
- ARC employees will participate in the region-wide guaranteed ride home program.

The TMP anticipates that approximately 15 percent of the ARC employees would use single-occupancy vehicles once the building is operational. Along with tenant parking, the total spaces for employees has been established at 374 with an additional 26 visitor spaces. TMP strategies will need to be coordinated with building tenants during the transition years when ARC does not occupy the full building.

Effective implementation of the TMP will allow the ARC to support the projected 2,000 occupants with the provision of 430 parking spaces.

National Historic Preservation Act

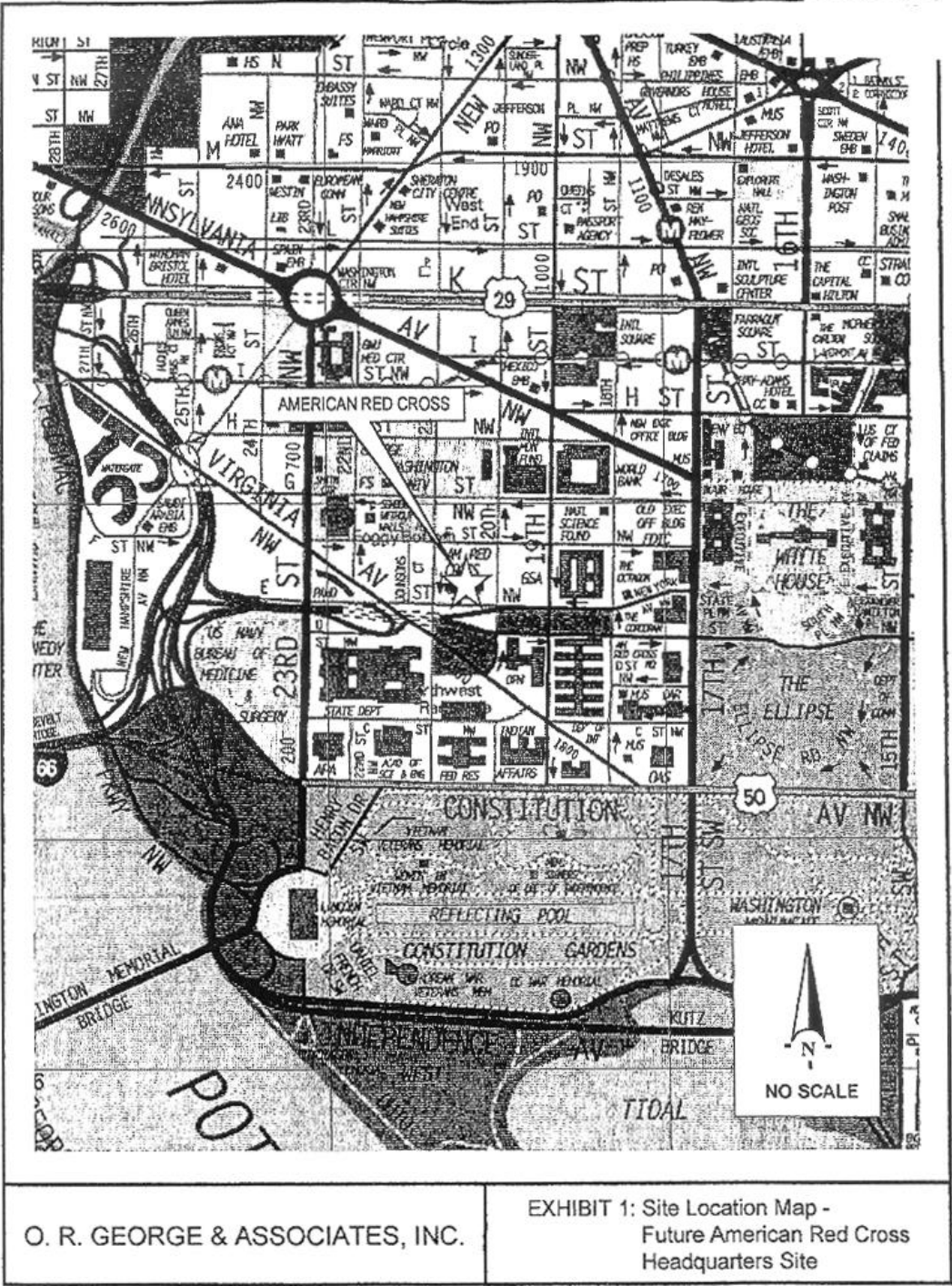
GSA, as the agency with jurisdiction over the land, served as the lead federal agency for review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The review culminated in the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), since demolition of the existing building would be an *adverse* effect on the building itself. The MOA (attached to this report) includes stipulated actions required of ARC. The MOA is based on the preliminary site and building plans approved by NCPC and the Commission of Fine Arts. GSA held several public meetings and circulated the draft MOA for public comment. NCPC participated in the MOA consultation since it has specific legislative authority to review and approve the ARC project at this site. NCPC signed the MOA on February 26, 1999. GSA and NCPC have concluded their responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act, as noted in the attached letter from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

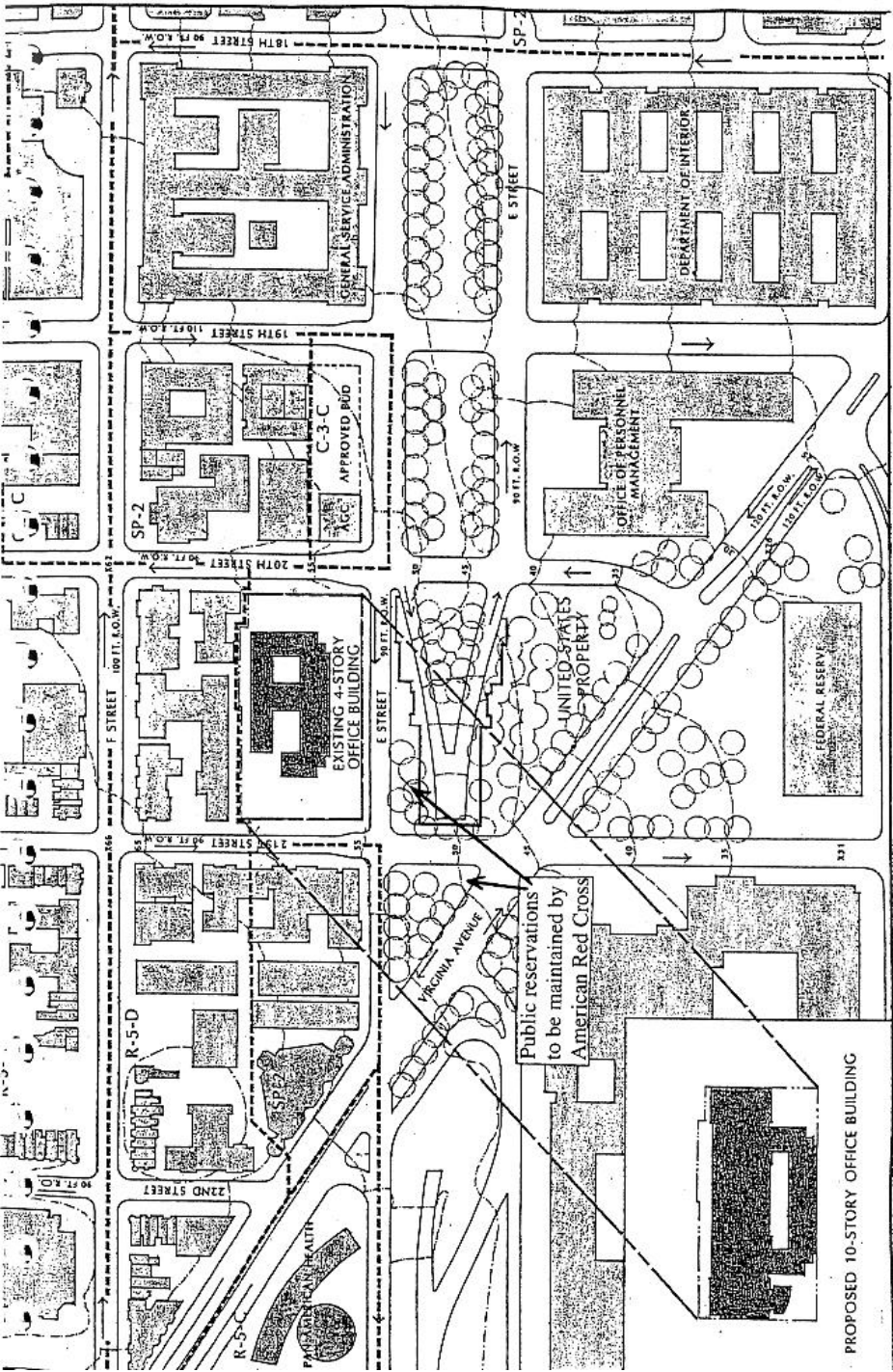
The D.C. Chapter House of the American Red Cross, built between 1950 and 1952, is a late work in the classical style associated with institutional and governmental Washington. The firm of Eggers and Higgins, the successor firm to John Russell Pope, designed the building.

Constructed of limestone with bronze trim, the building features sculptural bas-reliefs by Edmond Amateis.

The Chapter House occupies the southern half of its square and is generously set back from E Street, as well as from 20th and 21st Streets. Its siting is a significant feature of the building. The building is an element in what is known as the Northwest Rectangle, a partially realized plan to provide additional offices for the federal government in a complex similar to the Federal Triangle of a generation earlier. NCPC and its chairman, Ulysses S. Grant III, were driving forces behind this planned complex.

The Chapter House was designated a District of Columbia landmark in October 1996. For purposes of Section 106 review, GSA determined it eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing structure in a theoretical historic district encompassing the Northwest Rectangle. This historic district designation does not exist, but the documentation to prepare and submit a National Register nomination for the district was gathered by ARC and forwarded to the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office for its use during the Section 106 review and any future National Register consideration of a historic district in that part of the city.





VICINITY MAP

DEVELOPMENT DATA

